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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

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[NOTE. The articles on Psychology by Professor Subrie, commenced in the February JOURNAL, are suspended this month because of the illness of the author.—ED.]

THE SOCIAL TRAINING OF THE PRIVATE DUTY NURSE

BY S. LILLIAN CLAYTON, R.N.

One of our learned sociologists states that the three great causes of misery are ignorance, sickness and poverty. The three have a proper sequence. Let us therefore look at our subject first from the standpoint of society and its needs. Second, from the standpoint of the nurse, her function in relation to those needs, her preparation, her opportunity and her social value.

The needs of society are the same as those of the individual, as they are based upon the maladjustments of the units of which society is formed. This maladjustment we recognize today relates to the whole individual—mental, physical and social. Poverty and sickness are recognized as being two of the greatest factors in the maladjustment of life's forces, but what is not so keenly recognized is, that lack of knowledge of these forces in their relation one to another is the greatest factor of all. In order to get the right point of view as to the value of life, of health and strength, of character, we must have a clear conception of what the things are that cause the misery of men, what the influences are that produce degeneracy and how to readjust the forces that are not social.

As a private nurse I have seen the great opportunity which nurses have of bringing this knowledge before the minds of people. As a patient I have learned that it is not enough for the nurse to be willing to serve, she must have that social spirit which is the why of her ministry, and, knowing, she must be able to reach the causes as well as to understand the results, whether those results be mental, physical or social. As a teacher of nurses, I would have the profession see that the private duty nurse is not a factor standing out alone in the professional world, but that she is one of the greatest factors in the conserva-

tion of human resources, that she is one of the strongest connecting links between the profession which she represents and the public to which she must act as an interpreter. In the words of Richard Burton, "She yearns to make the world a sunnier clime to live in" and is "one who treads earth's ground, and ministers to men with all her might." She cannot however, minister to the mind or to the body without preparation; it is this preparation which we have to consider.

Dr. Devine has told us that there are ten reasons why our communities are not ideal. I shall give these as he enumerates them, believing that all nurses, private, institutional or public health, should have these carefully and scientifically presented to them in the training school, and that in order to fulfill their mission they should enlarge upon such knowledge until, by example and precept, they shall not only help prevent these causes but shall prevail on others to do the same.

The first of these reasons is an unsound physical heredity. From her study of the causes of mental and nervous diseases, has the nurse learned that the degenerate offspring of feeble-minded, alcoholic, or syphilitic parents are responsible for a very large proportion of our vice, crime and misery? All that happens to them, and to others because of them, is unnecessary and preventable—one might say, inexcusable.

Has she, from her study of prenatal care of mothers, from her knowledge of sex hygiene, been able to use her influence to protect the working woman in the weeks preceding childbirth, to help abolish working conditions which use up the vitality of girls before marriage, and has she used her knowledge of sex to educate, whenever possible, boys and girls to physical as well as moral fitness for parenthood? If she has not used her knowledge of social evils, of the evils of unprotected labor, of the evils of ignorance of sex among the young, then she must realize that opportunities have been lost, and that her value to society is less than it should be.

The second reason for an unsound community is that of unprotected childhood. The effort for such protection has had wonderful effects. Movements have been started for their protection from exposure and abandonment, from death by neglect, from inability of parents to care for their offspring, from cruelty, from exploitation for wages during young childhood, and preventive work has been established through schools, homes, child labor laws, physical supervision and correction of defects.

Has the nurse been properly educated who has not had her attention directed toward the importance of protected childhood, the proper relation of motherhood and infancy, the wise protection needed during adolescence, and the proper development of soul and body? So strongly

do I feel upon this subject that I think the training schools which teach the care of the child's body and do not consider these forces that destroy its soul have but poorly prepared their students to meet the community need. And the nurse who does not use her influence to bring these important facts before the attention of mothers, home makers, voters, or any person who can help in the work of protection, has failed in her responsibility as a nurse.

The third condition of the ideal community is the protection of the working period in the lives of men and women by preventing death, accident, and occupational diseases. By affording this, there is an opportunity for saving life and health and also for enabling the family to reach a higher degree of prosperity. If the nurse has not learned in her training school the dangers of death or injury from industrial accidents and occupational diseases, she should not be content until she has supplemented that lack by continued study, because in her contact with causes and effects she has learned that her interest is no longer centralized in the individual but in the community.

The fourth condition is the freeing of the community from preventable disease. Here the nurse, besides using her knowledge by personal activities, can do much in molding the public mind for voluntary coöperation in educational and relief measures, and can help in arousing a feeling of individual responsibility among the citizens.

A normal community would be free from crime. The nurse, because she wants to serve to her fullest capacity, should understand the social and economic causes producing the criminal, and here again she may become the interpreter of the abnormal one whom she would protect, to the community which she would serve.

To sum up Dr. Devine's factors for producing a sound community we have: sound heredity, protected childhood, prolonged working age, freedom from preventable disease and professional crime, indemnity against the economic losses by death, accident, and illness, rational education, normal standards of living, and a religion of service.

Because the private nurse comes into such close contact with home and family life, she would seem to be the most effective kind of a teacher and interpreter of these principles to the families in which she works and in this way can be an important factor in the development of the ideal community. To achieve this success both for herself and her profession, she must continue to build on the training she has received in the hospital, always keeping in mind the ideal of nursing as not only personal but community service.